



RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

One Corliss Park

Providence, RI 02908

MEETING MINUTES – General Meeting

Date: December 2, 2014

Time: Minutes recorded by: Helen Edwards

Minutes approved on:

Interpreters: Maureen McEntee, Carol Fay

- **Call to Order:**

- a. Board Chairperson Marie Lynch called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at 6:07 pm in the Cafeteria of the School for the Deaf.

- **Roll Call of Board of Trustees**

- b. In Attendance: Marie Lynch, Jodi Merryman, Joseph Fischgrund, Jonathan Henner, Jane Newkirk, Lindsey Medeiros, Amanda Montgomery, Heather Niedbala, Danielle Loughlin

- c. **Excused:** none

Public Comment: On behalf of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Teachers Association, Toby Liebowitz presented Chairperson Lynch with a plant and necklace in appreciation for her service on the Board of Trustees.

- **Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes:**

- o November 4, 2014- General Meeting Approved by consensus with minor changes. Jodi Merryman and the Board also thanked Chairperson Lynch for all her years and hard work and service to the Board.

- **Reports:**

- o Report of the Board of Trustees Chair:
Chairperson Lynch started the meeting by introducing the Health and Wellness presentation. This presentation was given by Penny Bailey, School Nurse and Todd Murano, Physical Education and Health Teacher. Ms. Bailey stated that she is in contact with the Department of Education and the Health Department frequently concerning health and safety concerns, regulations and procedures. She noted that there is a high level of poverty among RISD families and that often leads to health issues. She participates in a Food Bank program to obtain food for needy families on a weekly basis. RISDeaf also participates in a state wide Fruits and Vegetables program providing free healthy snacks to students every day. Ms. Bailey mentioned her frequent collaboration with the RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN) offering workshops for families about health and resource related topics.

Mr. Murano gave a presentation about what is taught in each grade following the adopted Health curriculum. Ms. Bailey added that it is often difficult to communicate health needs and concerns

to parents due to language and communication barriers. Mr. Murano added that this is also difficult because there is often very limited sign language communication at home between the student and caregivers. Chairperson Lynch commented that we need to engage the families in their children's health care as it impacts education. Director Maguire Heath stated that we are committed to educate our students and families about many health and wellness issues – nutrition, mental health, legal rights, etc. A copy of their Power Point presentation is attached.

- Review of Board Training proposals
Board discussed the two proposals for Board training that were presented to the Board. The first proposal was from Scott Mueller and the second was from Maureen Cotter. Chairperson Lynch stated that they are experienced school committee members also and are both members of RIASC. Chairperson Lynch also passed around their resumes. The Board found positives in both proposals but also had concerns about both, and felt that both proposals needed to be more specific as to what was actually going to be done and what outcomes were expected. Many Board members would like a blending of the two approaches outlined in the two proposals. Chairperson Lynch will ask the two individuals to revise their proposals and re-submit with more information. The school has \$3000.00 for training.
- Update re: Board member recruitment
Chairperson Lynch stated that Jodi Merryman has submitted her resignation from the Board effective in March after a long tenure of service. The new nominee to the Board is Nora Meah. Ms. Meah, who is hearing, is a former RIDE employee who has worked with the new teacher project and also with charter schools regarding organization and coordination of charter schools in the state. The Board seemed very interested in Ms. Meah and felt she might bring some fresh perspectives. A motion to present her name to the Board of Education was made by Heather Niedbala, by Jane Newkirk and approved by consensus. Chairperson Lynch also mentioned that she has spoken to Amanda Montgomery regarding the Chairperson position and was planning to present her name and qualifications to Commissioner Gist the next day.
- Strategic planning: Planning for Spring
Chairperson Lynch stated that we were fortunate that things moved smoothly this past year. When we move forward next year, the Board needs to begin strategic planning and reorganization as well as addressing staffing. Some subcommittee work will be essential. Director Maguire Heath told the Board that the current Strategic Plan really was not laid out as a typical strategic plan. This was given to Director Maguire Heath when she was hired. There are no time lines and it does not state who is responsible for what. She has been proceeding as best as she can.
- Review of By-Laws draft
Chairperson Lynch spoke about the By-Laws sent to the Board Members. The draft was modified in several areas. One area is the Health and Wellness section that was supposed to be changed but was not. The citation for the requirement of a Health and Wellness Committee and its responsibilities needs to be added. Director Maguire Heath also commented that there are a specific number of members that must serve on this subcommittee and that is listed in the legislation. Another area that has to be reviewed by our attorney is page 5 of the By-Laws. In addition, there should be notice of confidentiality in the By-Laws and direction

of how to proceed if a Board member does not fulfill their responsibilities. There also should be something added to the by-laws stating specifically what the responsibilities of Board members are (e.g. attendance requirements, etc.).

- Board Procedures: In response to a question from Jane Newkirk, Chairperson Lynch explained discussed Robert Rules of order. Chairperson Lynch stated that we do use Robert Rules of order but that historically, the Board preferred to make decisions by consensus. By doing this, the board could remain a unified ‘voice’, rather than disparate votes. Board members can request a roll-call vote on any issue. Related to Board procedures, Heather Niedbala mentioned that on January 15, 2015, the governor will be having an open summit to talk about OMA(Open Meetings Act) at CCRI in Warwick and she encouraged all to attend if possible.
- Reports of the Director and Assistant Director of Finance:
 - Update: CEASD School Viability Study
Director Maguire Heath updated the Board on the two-day study that was done at RISD. Two experienced superintendents came from CEASD and met with a variety of people. Reports should arrive in January.
 - Director Maguire Heath also asked the Board to read the article she put in the packets pertaining to Vermonters question the closing of the Austine School for the Deaf and the lack of preparedness to serve mainstream students who are Deaf and hard of hearing.
 - There were also copies of the scheduled dates for Boys and Girls Basketball games.
 - Director Maguire Heath also told the board about our first Secondary Parent Teacher conferences in many years. We had about 85 percent attendance of the secondary parents. Our next parent teacher conference night will be February 12, 2015. We will have a presenter to explain PARCC to the parents. PARCC is replacing NECAP in Rhode Island.
 - Director Maguire Heath spoke about the proposed Birthday Bash planned to celebrate the schools 140 years as a school and 125 years as a State School. Director Maguire Heath, Lindsey Medeiros and Ann Marie Clarkson met to discuss the details. Ann Marie Clarkson will be presenting to the Board at our January meeting.
 - ASL Proficiency
Director Maguire Heath explained the levels of standardization on ASLPI to the Board. The levels begin with *Survival* and rise to Superior Plus and higher. Originally, a level of *Superior* was going to be the standard, but we have lowered it to *Advanced*; there are some teachers who are already scoring in the *Superior* range. Training will again be provided in February 2015. There is also a summary of Director Maguire Heath’s report attached.
- Update re: Budget/Finance
 - Budget for FY 2015 and FY 2016
Maureen Wu explained to the new Board members how the Budget process works. She brought the budget to the Board in September for

fiscal year 2015 and 2016. Once the Board approves it then goes to the Department of Education. The end of January or mid-February the budget is presented to the legislature. She has not heard anything from the budget office regarding the budget submitted.

- Safety for Bus Transportation
Maureen Wu submitted to the Board a draft letter to Mr. Thomas Mullaney, the State Budget Officer with the Board of Trustees's concerns regarding the 15-passenger school bus. Maureen Wu has spoken to Thomas Mullaney who stated the state has a revolving fund for the purchase of vehicles and is looking to see what he can do. The Board unanimously felt that the letter needed to be strengthened and to state very clearly that the current vans were unsafe and this situation was unacceptable to the Board.

- Report of the Board of Trustees Policy Committee:

- 2nd Reading:

- Self-delegation of Medicine on Off-Campus Field Trips and Activities**

- Director Maguire Heath stated that she would have preferred to get more feedback after the first reading, since some of the issues raised in the discussion could have been addressed prior to the meeting. The policy will be reviewed and presented again at the next meeting.

- Adjournment by consensus at 8:56 pm.